Localisation

The vision and practice of ACT Alliance EU

2023

actalliance eu

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Image on front cover: Sam Juma Chelimo, an agricultural specialist with the Holy Trinity Peace Village — partner of Norwegian Church Aid in Kuron, South Sudan — talks with women in a remote community in South Sudan's Easter Equatoria State. Holy Trinity Peace Village and NCA support community response to food insecurity, cattle raiding and child abduction. (Paul Jeffrey — Life On Earth Pictures, 2021)

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Executive summary

Our common vision as ACT Alliance EU is of complementary action between local, national and international humanitarian, development and peace actors.

We seek transformative change of the current system in which a majority of local and national actors face disproportionate barriers to access for funding, ownership of programmes and decision-making spaces.

Such a shift in power entails giving primacy to local solutions and knowledge, and partnership models which uphold the dignity and ownership of local actors and wherever possible ensure their leadership.

Holy Trinity Peace Village support the Kuron region, where residents are vulnerable to cattle raiding and child abduction. The work of the organisation involves peace and reconciliation, infrastructure reconstruction and cash grants to women for livelihoods. (Paul Jeffrey for ACT Alliance; Norwegian Church Aid support local organisation Holy Trinity Peace Village in Kuron, South Sudan)

This policy guidance further breaks down the core elements of ACT Alliance EU's vision and objectives for pathways to localisation. Plus, examples of methodologies, tools and practice from across the ACT Alliance EU membership demonstrate the increasingly rich evidence bases of good practice by donors and civil society. The network provides rich expertise in accompaniment and mutual mentoring through collaborations between our INGO members and their local/national partners. We signal some of the forms of donor-funded pilots for locally led response and new forms of partnership which are delivering fruitful outcomes for nationally owned steer of localisation.

The paper discusses the vision of the role of international NGO intermediaries and partners as one of complementarity with that of the diverse forms of local and national actors. It is a vision rooted in collective responsibility and action as well articulated by humanitarian actors in Nigeria and South Sudan:

> "The rights and needs of affected communities become the common purpose of all humanitarian action, with both international and local actors respecting humanitarian principles. From the perspective of local actors, a whole range of actors play a role, and it requires a diversity of actors collaborating in a less competitive environment and with local leadership and coordination. What is needed is a collective responsibility, requiring collective action and mutual accountability to ensure adequate coverage and timely, effective humanitarian response."[1]

Explanatory note

This paper sets out the common positions of ACT Alliance EU members[2] on the scope

and ambitions of localisation. ACT Alliance EU members are also part of the global ACT Alliance. Through country and regional forums, members of the global ACT Alliance collaborate operationally, exchange practices and jointly develop capacities. All ACT Alliance EU members also contribute to the rapid response fund, a mechanism for support to locally led response, including support to ecumenical response through church councils and networks. In addition, they contribute to the joint development of ACT Alliance global policies and advocacy.

While ACT Alliance EU members have differing experience in engagement with local actors, this paper sets out scope, components, objectives and underpinning values of localisation common to all. There are, equally, many instances of strong interaction as ACT Alliance members of jointly working toward localisation, illustrated in this paper.

'Localisation' per sé has developed in the humanitarian sector in recent years through the World Humanitarian Summit, Grand Bargain and platforms such as Charter4Change, and this position paper addresses localisation from this humanitarian focus. Nonetheless, many of the first responders, local actors and faith communities we partner with or support, identify needs and operate simultaneously or interchangeably across the three sectors. The same applies to areas of our ACT Alliance EU members' programming. Therefore, many of the examples of methodologies and tools outlined and referenced in the paper draw on principles and practice applied across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus.

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1   Kiewied T., Soremekun, O., and Jok, J. (2020) Towards Principled Humanitarian Action in Conflict Contexts. Understanding the Role of Partnerships. Voices From Nigeria and South Sudan

2   This policy guidance reflects the views of contributing authors: Act Church of Sweden, Christian Aid, DanChurchAid (DCA), Diakonia Katastrophenhilfe (DKH), Diakonia Sweden, Finn Church Aid, HEKS/EPER, Kerk in Actie, Norwegian Church Aid.

ACT Alliance EU common vision for localisation

Gender justice is central to meaningful efforts to empower locally led action. Women Fighting for Climate Action panel, Beijing +25 side event. (ACT Alliance, 2019)

A shift in power: towards local leadership and complementarity

ACT Alliance EU recognises that there is no one-size-fits all blueprint for localisation of humanitarian response. We understand localisation as a process of giving primacy to the solutions of first responders, communities and diverse forms of local civil society. Transformative change addresses the broader issues of historical power imbalances. That is, a system in which international actors hold disproportionate power in decision-making spaces at programming and political levels and in framing the concepts of key sectoral terminology and language.

This does not undermine international actors nor pit them against local civil society. As a network of church-based organisations, it is our conviction that our organisation and churches are a global community of equals where we share and are affected by our respective joys and sufferings. In this community each part has something to give and different needs. Only by harnessing, combining and mutually strengthening the diversity of gifts and talents brought together in interplay does it become possible to reach the best outcomes We call this 'complementarity'.

As companions of our partners, our roles as INGOs necessarily vary according to our partners' degree of experience and capacities. If we work successfully toward our localisation goals, the dynamics of our partnerships will change. For us, this is a positive change: we nonetheless will all face a common task and the increasing complexities facing the humanitarian system in many contexts, which require strong civil society at all levels.

Recognising the risks in localisation terminology

Our common vision for localisation is rooted in upholding the dignity of people affected by crises — particularly marginalised groups — and is inextricably linked to anti-racism, decolonisation of aid, inclusion and diversity. It is important to recognise that 'localisation' and 'local' are racially charged terms which, misapplied, risk being employed by actors in the sector with power to marginalise highly capable and experienced civil society and community-based groups in crisis-affected countries.

Growing consensus on core localisation components

The definition and scope of "localisation" and "local" remain highly contested, at times resulting in framings which dilute or distort those agreed under political commitments to the Grand Bargain (see "Defining local actors" on page 9) and the internationally endorsed Localisation Global Framework. The resulting risk of its misapplication is well-articulated by Albie Baguios, founder of Aid Re-imagined:

> (...) a whole-of-society approach recognizing the diversity of, and within, communities and the need to work with multiple actors at all levels has been diluted to mere efficiencies in sub-granting or nationalising INGO offices.
> *Albie Baguios, Localisation Re-Imagined[3]*

There is nonetheless an increasing evidence base demonstrating the effectiveness of locally owned and led humanitarian action in terms of outcomes for crisis affected populations.[4] This effectiveness includes factors such as strong existing capacities, speed to respond, accountability to affected populations, trusting relationships between local actors and first responders with affected populations. In addition, many bring substantial experience in operating flexibly across joint humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming in complex contexts. There is also broad consensus in global and national localisation frameworks[5] and donor policy on the need for:

■ Strengthening mutual accountability between donors and affected populations including fair sharing of risk and accountability mechanisms which are feasible for smaller organisations.

3 Baguios, Albie (2022) Localisation re-imagined: Ethics and purpose in localisation

4 See the references throughout this document from across the ACT Alliance EU network as well as the sites of Charter4Change and its INGO and national signatories and endorsers, the Local2Global Protection Platform, the Start Network, the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, GNDR, REAP, recent IASC reporting on accountability toward local actors.

5 See, for example, the Nigeria Localisation Framework; the Start Fund Network's localisation framing and fund structure for Bangladesh; the framework references underpinning the Global Framework for Localisation. See also multiple donor strategies aimed at increasing equity in partnerships between INGO and local actors, as well as local actor leadership: including Danida, Irish Aid, UN OCHA in Lebanon and USAID.

- Recognition of the disconnect between the complexity and multiplicity of compliance measures and reporting local and national actors must navigate.

- Commitments to enable a diversity of civil society to engage in crisis response and cooperation. The ability of local actors to build and retain capacity and human resources necessary to comply with stringent standards is greatly hindered by the lack of sustainable access to opportunities for organisational development and funding.

- Engaging with existing capacities among local and national actors.

- Ensuring inclusion in humanitarian coordination and advocacy spaces.

- Sustainable, directly accessible and flexible mechanisms enabling local organisations and self-help groups to access and leverage sustainable funding.

- Systemic efforts to address the unfairly biased and competitive funding environment and competition for human resources.

Integrated across the preceding points are the specific needs and challenges of local faith actors, and organisations representing and led by people marginalised due to factors including, but not limited to, gender, disability and age.

ACT Alliance EU members aim to see donors and international actors acknowledge and fund the critical role played by local faith-based and secular actors in humanitarian response as well as in development and peacebuilding. Our goal is to see policy and practice reflect local actors' knowledge, existing capacities and accountability mechanisms.

Progress toward such a vision of localisation is complex and shaped by the politics impacting humanitarian and development response. The readiness of donor and recipient countries to protect and expand civic space, foreign and security policy all impact greatly on citizen and civil society action. Therefore, frameworks for localisation must be contextualised and models for coordination between actors determined by local, national and regional dynamics. However, as dozens of initiatives, including the Accelerating Localisation Through Partnerships pilot demonstrated, local to global coordination and strong national steer and networks can allow for important learnings and to contextualise frameworks for the regional and national levels.[6]

Defining local actors

ACT Alliance EU members partner with civil society organisations, local authorities, local markets and service providers.

When referring to partnerships with local civil society and citizen-led action, ACT Alliance EU network members refer to diverse local formal and non-formal civil society actors. These range from national and local NGOs, community-based networks, local committees, social movements, women-led and youth organisations. They encompass faith, secular and interfaith actors and networks.

We are not seeking to shift the current humanitarian architecture down to national level in a way which increases burden on national NGOs or consolidates the power of a select few and closes the space for local actors and communities. Rather, localisation concerns shifting the ownership of response and accessibility to the sector of first responders and diverse civil society.

ACT Alliance EU categorises local actors as:

- **National NGOs (NNGOs)** operate only in the country where they are headquartered but work in multiple sub-national regions. They have no affiliation to an international NGO.

- **Local NGOs (LNGOs)** operate in a specific, geographically defined, sub-national area, without affiliation to either national or international NGO.

- **Community-based organisations (CBOs)** including community-based networks/groups operate at a specific, geographically defined, community level without affiliation to NNGOs. They are sometimes affiliated with LNGOs but are often non-formal and non-registered entities. They can include social movements and activists. These include both local and national faith networks — including communities of places of worship, church councils, Islamic councils and other local faith-based organisations.

Local authorities and local markets & service providers are also key local actors with a stake in humanitarian, development and peace outcomes. In some contexts, ACT Alliance EU members directly work to mobilise, strengthen and partner with those local and national stakeholders. In many cases, however, local actors in-country with whom we partner often enjoy strong coordination and engagement themselves. Where this isn't yet established, ACT Alliance EU members seek where possible to support partners in developing their own relations with relevant local and national structures. The latter applies to members operating solely or primarily through partners and to the survivor and community-led response methodology, as explored in the following section.

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6   Accelerating Localisation through Partnerships (2019) Pathways to Localisation: A framework towards locally led humanitarian response in partnership-based action. C. Schmalenbach with Christian Aid, CARE, Tearfund, ActionAid, CAFOD, Oxfam

ACT Alliance EU methodologies and examples from practice

As a global network, the more than 135 ACT Alliance members have geographically broad and long-term experience engaging in partnerships with communities and local actors on a wide array of programming sectors. Many of the organisations' core models have centred on partnership with local faith and secular actors rooted in equity, dignity and respect for the agency of partners.

Yet both ACT Alliance EU European-based membership and global ACT Alliance members have sought in recent decades to proactively address imbalances in those partnerships and models. Those imbalances stem from varying factors, some discussed extensively above including the humanitarian and development funding architecture and power dynamics shaped by colonial structures and global inequalities.

Notably, members of ACT Alliance played a central role in the formulation of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit pledges to local civil society and local faith actors, and in the development of the localisation commitments of the Charter4Change[7]. The EU network and global Alliance have

collaborated to engage with and support the Grand Bargain localisation workstreams.

At EU and Member State level, members have engaged with donors to develop policy and practice facilitating locally led action. For example, the group cash survivor and community-led response methodology — specifically group cash transfers[8] and the community resilience approach — have been taken up in EU humanitarian cash and disaster preparedness policies[9].

Members have also been engaged in EU and Member State-funded pilots for localisation with NGO consortia. This includes the Accelerating Localisation Through Partnerships programme aimed at establishing national steering committees of key local and national humanitarian stakeholders, and both national and global frameworks for political and civil society action for equitable partnerships10. It also includes the 'ToGETHER' pilot aimed at increasing coordination of localisation efforts in eight countries and support and advocacy capacity. See below for details of these and further initiatives.

The following section provides examples of members' operational modalities and

polices which seek to build equitable partnerships with local/national actors and local leadership. The examples are framed under four key elements of localisation: partnerships, funding incentive structures, accountability and capacity sharing,

coordination in advocacy spaces. These four elements touch also upon the issues of risk and security, gender and climate, all of which will be deepened through our ACT Alliance EU Strategy for 2022+.

1. Frameworks and modalities for transformative partnerships

Localisation means being able to act where the needs are through a risk and context informed partnership that can act directly to respond to crises and increasing needs. Transformative partnerships are those which take complementarity as a basis, as we exemplify in this section. The aim of such partnerships is for local and national actors to be able to retain staff, access funding and manage projects autonomously.

Reaching forgotten or hard to reach areas: Diakonia Sweden

For Diakonia, carrying out humanitarian assistance through local partners has been a way to address the needs on the ground based on the contextual experience, knowledge and contacts of the local partners. This has ensured that Diakonia has been able to reach areas within programme countries which for many INGOs are inaccessible due to the context (such as conflict). This has allowed Diakonia to engage in humanitarian programming in often forgotten or hard to reach areas, ensuring that unserved or underserved populations have been able to get their needs met. This has, for example, included remote areas in the regions of Timbuktu and Koulikoro in Mali, which international agencies and donors would be unable to reach by only working through self-implementation.

Connecting learnings and outcomes from regular development programming is important as this often involves the same partner organisations.

Ensuring 'do no harm' in partnerships: Diakonia Sweden and HEKS/EPER

Careful contingency and security planning and risk assessments are crucial both for our international members and local partners operating across development and humanitarian sectors. Members of ACT Alliance EU have developed planning tools to assess the potential risks facing local partners of engaging in each humanitarian intervention. Notably, the tools include analysis of perceptions by other actors and account for factors such as faith basis or perceived affiliations.

For HEKS/EPER, this analysis is built in through its mainstreaming of the 3-step model of conflict sensitivity developed by KOFF/Swisspeace in all programming and at an institutional level. The model seeks to ensure HEKS/EPER and its partners stay effectively engaged, avoid creating or exacerbating tensions or conflict, and strengthen opportunities for peace.

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7   See https://charter4change.org/commitments/

8   Tønning M., and Kabeta, A, R. (2021). Group Cash Transfers: Guidance and Tools. Pilot version. Paris: Key Aid Consulting.

9   DG ECHO (2021). Guidance Note: Disaster Preparedness.

10 C. Schmalenbach with Christian Aid, CARE, Tearfund, ActionAid, CAFOD, Oxfam (2019) Accelerating Localisation through Partnerships (2019) Pathways to Localisation: A framework towards locally-led humanitarian response in partnership-based action.

Ensuring a dynamic approach to complementarity in partnerships: HEKS/EPER

ACT Alliance EU members aim at developing equal partnerships in their interventions across the globe by adapting the partnership model according to the contextual opportunities and challenges.

HEKS/EPER describe how dynamic and equitable partnerships are built according to the specificities of each context and case. Partnerships with local actors are prioritised. HEKS/EPER offers its local partners the possibility to bring in its own expertise and to mutually agree on modalities for working with the capacities of HEKS/EPER's other local, Swiss or international partners. The aim is that the complementary roles of each actor, the cooperation between them, and the application of a participatory multi-stakeholder approach throughout project cycles, enable systemic change.

In certain contexts, HEKS/EPER has a more passive role limited to few specific responsibilities, whereas in others direct implementation can be the preferred option in mutual agreement with local actors. Between these extremes there is

a spectrum of different roles HEKS/EPER plays within its partnerships. In general, the organisation tries to be itself integrated as far as possible into the local context and to build partnerships based on local ownership, priorities, and capacities. Whenever local leadership is readily possible, this is the preferred choice for partnerships.

In contexts where this is particularly difficult to achieve, HEKS/EPER adopts a gradual approach and longer-term partnerships. This involves investing in partners to transform sometimes limited local ownership into local leadership. This is illustrated well in Haiti, where HEKS/EPER's long-term presence and partnerships have been valued by local actors as a trustworthy partner. While we implement ourselves part of the portfolio, we support local humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding action on an equal footing, to establish cooperation between local actors, and strengthen local leadership and governance. In other countries, such as Brazil, Georgia and Eastern European, HEKS/EPER is far less involved in operational questions and complements its local partners with fewer and more specific competencies related to effectiveness.

2. Capacity sharing and accountability

This section employs 'capacity sharing' and 'capacity strengthening'. Where capacity sharing is used, it emphasises a two-way relationship between the INGO and LNGO/NNGO partner in reinforcing each other's capacities building on each other's respective strengths and experience.

In accordance with Charter4Change commitments and those of the Global Localisation Framework, ACT Alliance EU members commit to ensuring that the form and content of capacity strengthening activities are decided and shaped by partners. Accompaniment for capacity strengthening cannot be decoupled from sustainable funding and resource provision and support: it goes without saying that it is counterproductive to build in capacity activities while neglecting to ensure sustainable and feasible access to funding and human resources.

ACT Alliance EU members are CHS certified and are continually increasing efforts to building their accountability to crisis affected populations through the self-assessment reporting. In addition, the organisations work with partners to build our respective capacities for safeguarding, complaints and feedback response mechanisms etc. Capacity sharing is important both for our increased accountability to affected populations, recognition of accountability mechanisms at local level, and to build local capacities wherever possible.

This element is crucial to our interactions with partners and, as the examples below demonstrate, long-term engagement with partners and building local coordination is central to our commitment to strengthening resilience.

DanChurchAid (DCA)

Resilience programming: Mali

UNMAS Mali published a call for programming in which applicants had to clearly explain how they would partner with Malian actors throughout and to present how they would accompany in capacity strengthening.

DCA and two partners, ASDAP and AAPPOR developed the programme concept jointly and ran a participatory evaluation with the aim of developing a plan for capacity development of the partners involved according to their respective existing capacities. Under the programme model, DCA supports their partners, who in turn manage implementation. The support is delivered along three lines: formal training on specific topics; ongoing regular support by DCA technical and finance teams for funding, implementation and quality assurance.

Where the partner has less significant experience in assistance to victims of mines and education on the risks related to mines and explosives, the DCA programme lead provides continuous mentoring support based together with the partner at the field office. Through this support, DCA offers its expertise in demining and mine and IED risk education.

After evaluation at the end of the project cycle, DCA's partners will have the opportunity to obtain UNMAS provisory accreditation for mine action in Mali to operate autonomously.

Building an inclusive and transparent local leadership model: Zimbabwe

The Sizimele project, a resilience building project in Zimbabwe, is governed by a Board structure that gives the national and local organisations leading the project the power and capacity to harness their strengths as local leaders. At the same time, members develop greater governance and robust due diligence systems while improving programme risk management.

The Sizimele governance structure has established checks and balances, both internal and external, enabling lead partners to discharge duties ethically and effectively, remaining accountable to all stakeholders. This is done through the governance structure providing strategic direction, approving policies to put strategy into effect and providing informed oversight of implementation and performance.

The key success pillars of the governance structure include identification of consortium partners with different skill sets, joint ownership of interventions. This includes the creation of a Board of Directors where all partners are represented (with DCA chairing as the lead partner within the

(DanChurchAid, Matobo, 2021)

consortium because it holds the contract with the donor), quarterly Board meetings where each Board member gives a full report to the Board, and equal decision power by all members of the Board where resolutions at Board level are based on majority vote. The structure allows for a logical allocation of funds among the different partners in accordance with funds availability and priorities within communities and different partner expertise.

Capacity strengthening: Diakonia Sweden

Capacity strengthening with local and national civil society is a priority of all Diakonia Sweden's country-level development and humanitarian programming. Building on this capacity strengthening approach, Diakonia has increased capacity strengthening as a key component of humanitarian response: from supporting operational capacities to support for compliance with international humanitarian standards, and for meeting ad-hoc needs such as safety of humanitarian assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Diakonia Sweden works almost wholly through partnership with local agencies. Those agencies are of varying levels of experience and capacity. In many instances, partners have high capacity and strong organisational structures. Diakonia also works with partners with weaker organisational structures and low resources, but strong operational capacities, often working in complex conflict settings outside the reach of international actors. In the latter case, Diakonia invests in long-term organisational strengthening and relevant mentoring and at an advocacy level frequently emphasises the responsibility of INGOs and donors to allocate budget for capacity sharing initiatives.

Mentoring: South Sudan partnership model

The model places emphasis on ensuring Christian Aid in South Sudan support is close to the partners in the field so that capacity strengthening in the form of mentorship, skills transfer and learning can happen on the go or in real time. This close contact is maintained through regular contact, information exchange. This enables Christian Aid to provide proactive on the job skills transfer and mentorship with the

aim of delivery high quality programme buttressed by excellence in finance and operation which are key for accelerated path to localisation.

Christian Aid staff support partners at field level to strengthen their donor compliance mechanisms, reducing the risk of non-compliance with donors standards.

Both Christian Aid and partners work collaboratively and in a complementary way recognising each other's strengths and added value as independent entities. The mentorship model promotes mutual understanding and engagement with partners in a way that ensures there is no gap in Christian Aid support that can potentially impede or negatively impact programme implementation.

Skills exchange often occur at the field level during trouble-shooting and sharing of context specific knowledge and solutions on a particular project related challenge. This results from the close working relationship which is based upon the understanding that each have a contribution to make to the partnership in one way or another.

Sharing capacity with the business community: Finn Church Aid — Uganda

The Finn Church Aid (FCA) Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme in Rwamwanja, Uganda, is an example of how local humanitarian stakeholders and development partners can work together. The program aims to provide the refugee community with decent work in the vicinity of the refugee settlement. FCA's model for TVET programming involves the business community in planning and participation in the training sessions. Those sessions support refugee students to start their own businesses, and FCA facilitates training and provides a resource person to link students up with existing labour market opportunities during their studies.

FCA views a key element of localisation as enabling local government and private sector actors to lead such initiatives. In the example provided, the Ugandan Government and local authorities play a vital role in creating the policy environment needed to allow refugees to work and benefit from government services. FCA advocates for flexibility of international donors to support such new models and underline their important role in facilitating dialogue between the stakeholders.

Students receive graduation certificates from ministers engaged with the TVET programme. (Finn Church Aid)

3. Coordination, policy & advocacy

ACT Alliance EU members have been at the centre of efforts to mobilise and coordinate local civil society to reach a more level playing field in humanitarian coordination spaces and greater leadership in policy and advocacy spheres.

As discussed above, members have been actively engaged in the Charter4Change movement. This involves supporting the development of coordination between local agencies seeking to shape the localisation agenda as well as to increase advocacy presence. The local and international members of Charter4Change presented clear calls to action for the renewal of the Grand Bargain 2.0 and throughout the years have ensured strong representation in advocacy forums. Charter4Change has greatly strengthened country level localisation dialogues as well as national NGO networks and their engagement with international spaces for dialogue, decision making and advocacy.

There is a long way to go: the jargon, languages used and systems for decision-making and coordination forums still largely exclude local organisations and first responders. Nonetheless, at all levels, our members have been working to increase coordination and presence of local agencies in key spaces of influence.

Addressing challenges to coordination

Advancing on such coordination requires internal changes to programming models and developing shared understandings, guidelines and commitments throughout organisations. Time and resources at country operations level often presents an impasse for progress toward localised models. To address this, Dan Church Aid have developed a living online tool comprising of detailed workshop materials on localisation. The tool is designed for both country teams of INGOs and local partners. The tool aims at stimulating discussion and reflections on tailoring localisation objectives and actions to the context and to each organisation's degree of experience working in partnerships.

Diakonia Katastrophenhilfe collaboration with the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR): Local Leadership for Global Impact Project (2021–2023) — resilience building and advocacy

Working in partnership across 50 countries with funding from the BMZ, Diakonia Katastrophenhilfe and the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) are scaling up the use of approaches by local actors to disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action.

Through three workstreams, the initiative does so by strengthening the capacity and innovation of communities, local actors and local humanitarian stakeholders as well as their influence and engagement with coordination and decision-making structures:

- Utilising local data to inform holistic development and humanitarian actions to address the underlying drivers of disaster risk.

- Translating global climate change projection models into a format which is feasible for analysis and use by local actors to effectively plan to reduce the risk of future disasters.

- Utilising local contingency planning, for post-impact response actions, to support planning for locally led anticipatory action, for pre-impact early actions, and community-led crisis response.

The consortia of INGOs engaged in the project facilitate initial engagements in coordination and advocacy spaces, and provide the technical support of the GNDR network.

Results to date

Taking the third workstream by way of example, the initiative is resulting in increased multi-stakeholder engagement with local contingency planning and is attracting initial investments in localised financing mechanisms.

Using the survivor and community-led response methodology based on micro grant transfers to community self-help groups (see the approach detailed on page 19), the GNDR consortia engage all formal and informal civil society actors and national disaster management authorities relevant to contingency planning and anticipatory action from the outset.

The process then involves gathering forecasting data to inform local contingency planning and policy and socialising the solutions of local actors with policy decision makers. The first phase has seen the establishment of localised risk financing mechanisms by international donors, using group cash transfers. The second phase emphasises support to local actors increase their influence to shape the language and development of national and international anticipatory action frameworks.

Developing global and national localisation frameworks: Christian Aid and consortia partners CARE, Oxfam, CAFOD, Tearfund

The ECHO-funded Accelerating Localisation Through Partnerships (ALTP) programmes in South Sudan, Nigeria, Myanmar and Nepal led to findings on models of partnership which local and national actors considered most effective for strengthening their autonomy, leadership, visibility and sustainable access to resources. National and Global Localisation Frameworks were produced through far-reaching research with local actors and the leadership of

national strategy steering committees created through the ALTP pilot.11

The Global Localisation Framework has since been endorsed by the Grand Bargain localisation workstream, providing a point of reference for NGOs and donors. The frameworks set out targets and corresponding indicators for local & international civil society and donors provide a framework for progress toward equitable partnerships. These include:

- Establishing long-term partnership agreements for funded and non-funded arrangements, and with flexibility for shorter-term project sub-agreements.
- Advancing toward the 5 main sets of partnership principles set out in the Interagency Standing Committee Guidance Note endorsed by the Grand Bargain workstream.
- Crediting local partners in communications, with supporters and donors.
- Developing models for collaboration and decision-making of local actors throughout the programme cycle.
- Capacity strengthening and mentoring activities are responsive to the needs of the local partner and resourced sustainably to avoid tick box exercises.

- Ensuring ethical recruitment to encourage retention of staff in local partner organisations.
- Coverage of local partner overheads and flexible funding.

Since the pilot ended, the consortia, and the L/NNGOs engaged, have consolidated gains. The South Sudan steering committee, for example, has become a strategic advocacy platform which now regularly engages with UN clusters. The members are frequently invited to participate in donor roundtables and discussions on good partnerships and direct support to L/NNGOs. The Committee has advocated strongly around on the Grand Bargain commitment to 25% of project funds to go directly to local actors. One result of this is a significant increase in sustainable and predictable access for L/NNGOs to the UN Country Based Pooled Funds.

As the ALTP consortia partners increased their commitments to cover indirect recovery costs, other INGOs are introducing similar modalities. For example, Christian Aid in South Sudan pioneered commitments to divide indirect recovery cost funding equally, 50-50, with partners and have rolled out the commitment in their programming globally.

11 C. Schmalenbach with Christian Aid, CARE, Tearfund, ActionAid, CAFOD, Oxfam (2019) Accelerating Localisation through Partnerships (2019) Pathways to Localisation: A framework towards locally-led humanitarian response in partnership-based action.

4. Funding structures facilitating localisation and locally led response

ACT Alliance EU members have been developing and supporting funding modalities which are accessible to local actors. This includes endorsing models that provide the flexibility, a 'safe to fail' environment, and resourcing for response led by local agencies.

Group-cash transfers — survivor and community-led response (sclr)

Local to Global Protection Initiative (DCA, CA and Act CoS) have co-developed with several NNGOs the survivor/community-led response (sclr) and produced several learning papers and learning reviews (HPG). The collective worked with CaLP (Cash Learning Platform) to develop guidelines for Group Cash Transfer to be applied by the humanitarian sector.

SCLR group facilitated by YMCA Jerusalem which generated marked results for women's leadership. (Nils Carstensen / Local2Global Protection)

The EU department for Humanitarian Aid's new thematic cash policy integrates the survivor and community-led response Group Cash Transfer model for the enabling of community and local agency-owned response. Group Cash Transfers provide small envelopes of cash to crisis affected groups to design micro-project to address their needs. In several cases, the initial injection of up to 5 000 USD has been used by community groups. This is used by many self-help groups to further leverage funding with the local government and to develop relations with service providers.

Community cash transfers seek to transform traditional INGO-local agency and national or local NGO-beneficiary relations, increasing effectiveness. NGOs take on a supporting and mentoring role for operations, coordination, accountability and linking to necessary services. Progressively, the community groups gain independence and the role of supporting INGO reduces. The model is delivering strong results in terms of speed, relevance, ownership, psychosocial recovery, women's leadership and the involvement of marginalised community members in anticipatory action to manage humanitarian crisis and conflict dynamics.

ACT Alliance Rapid Response Funding mechanism

ACT Alliance EU members contribute to a rapid response funding mechanism which is accessible to local and national members of the Alliance. ACT members at local and national levels are rooted

within communities, familiar with their needs and positioned to respond rapidly in times of crisis. The Global Rapid Response Fund (GRRF) is an annual funding appeal administered by the ACT Alliance secretariat. The fund prioritises ACT local and national members in recognition of the distinct advantage these members have in providing timely, high quality, locally led emergency response interventions.

The ACT GRRF ensures resources are available to members of the ACT Alliance where national or local members have the capacity to respond. The emergency could be of a rapid onset nature (e.g., earthquake or flood), slow onset emergency requiring early response or emergency relief (e.g., drought), or of a complex humanitarian character (e.g., refugee or internal displacement situation, resulting from breakdown of social, political and economic systems).[12]

German Foreign Office funding model

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH) is part of the German Foreign Office funded ToGETHER (Towards Greater Effectiveness and Timeliness of Humanitarian Emergency Response) programme promoting the localisation of humanitarian action. 40 local and national actors and four German INGOs are partnering in this initiative to strengthen and share capacities, advocate for better access to funding and humanitarian coordination as well as a shift in leadership in the humanitarian system towards local actors.

Here, the donor agreed to an increased budgetary flexibility which allows the 40 participating local actors to easily tailor and adapt activities to priorities identified during programme implementation. In practice, this is reflected in both the governance structure of the programme as well as the flexible use of funds. In each of the eight countries, the five local partners form Country Steering Committees which are responsible for programme implementation in their country. Budget lines are broadly defined, and funds can be used flexibly for capacity strengthening and sharing, advocacy, learning and exchange activities. The activities are defined collectively by programme stakeholders and approved by the Country Steering Committees during the programme.

Pooled funds

Similarly, as a member of the Start Fund for Bangladesh, Christian Aid has been able to mobilise donor financing to resource pooled funding for rapid response. This is directly available to local agencies as well as national and international NGOs and links into long-term capacity strengthening: see further details of the composition and results of four years' implementation.

We endorse the European Commission's commitments to explore pooled funding mechanisms, such as the LIFT Turkey funding, which has enabled direct access for local agencies and provided the flexibility for those agencies to use the funding according to contextual needs. We however caution that careful analysis is necessary to assess the accessibility of pooled funds to a diversity of local actors.

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12   ACT Alliance Humanitarian Policy

Working together through the global ACT Alliance

Across the global ACT Alliance, members have long-term experience operating in partnership with survivors, communities and local civil society, including religious leaders and faith actors. Through the so — called ACT Forum Mechanism, members coordinate and work together operationally and in advocacy as local, national and international organisations and partners at country and regional levels. In many cases, the Forums also work with faith leaders and Church Councils, as well as the respective youth and women coordinators, as an important part of promoting local structures actively engaged in supporting humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work at community and national levels.

The Forum mechanism supports local and national members to increasingly adopt a leadership position in humanitarian response. All ACT members and forums are required to have Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRPs) in place. These plans provide guidance and support to help deliver a coordinated ACT response in humanitarian action. Forums and members work together to prepare for and coordinate

ACT Alliance, 2022. Rapid Response fund: As part of the efforts to respond to the looming hunger crisis in Karamoja subregion in 2022, Church of Uganda in partnership with ACT Alliance, carried out distribution of relief food to support the people of Kotido and Kaabong Districts which form part of the North Karamoja Diocese.

Kenyan NGO Anglican Development Services, and DKH partner in the ACT Alliance Forum in Kenya, support families hit by the severe drought in Turkana county, Kenya (ADS Kenya, ACT Alliance 2022)

how they will prioritise locally led response to specific crises whilst also identifying gaps in capacities and resources that can be augmented by the global ACT network. The EPRPs help member organisations to ensure they can assist people in need effectively, efficiently, and in a timely manner.

Working together through Forums to progress on localisation

The ACT Alliance country and regional Forums provide spaces for exchange of information necessary to local and national actors. They promote coordination between members in relation to geographic coverage and the coherence of response, avoiding duplication. Such coordination allows the Forum members to identify the right actors to reach those hardest to access and to strengthen the position of local and national members.

For example, the Malawi ACT Forum established meeting spaces in which all members — whether local, national or international NGOs — have the same voice and leadership level. During the COVID pandemic the collective work to conduct a mapping of capacity and awareness building needs enabled effective and coordinated response.

The Forum mechanism in Malawi and globally garners visibility for the competencies, ideas and activities of local and national partners. Increasingly, members are engaging through the Forums to work jointly to progress on localisation and equitable partnership commitments; addressing the quality of partnerships from project design and needs assessment to implementation and MEAL, as well as involvement in decision-making forums.

For example, the South Sudan ACT Forum began with international NGO members garnering visibility for their partners and providing joint capacity building

opportunities. The Forum has also worked closely with the South Sudan Council of Churches, whose network of churches and of interfaith partners was instrumental in garnering the peace agreement and holds a high degree of trust for humanitarian and development activities among the population.

The Forum then mobilised around the Accelerating Localisation Through Partnerships project outlined on page 8, and has made strides in progressing jointly on localisation commitments. The ALTP project introduced the practice of peer-to-peer review by partners vis-à-vis the funding members' partnership models. ACT members in South Sudan progressed from ad hoc capacity building provision to accompaniment models. ACT members jointly mobilised and supported partners' leadership and participation in the 'localisation Strategy Board', established at national level to coordinate advocacy of L/NNGOs and communities on partnership and programming issues.

The joint efforts of local and national actors together with the Forum has led to ongoing strong interest and engagement of communities and L/NNGOs in national, regional and international humanitarian spaces. As ACT members in the South Sudan Forum integrate community-based

approaches and long-term capacity and financial support to address contextual capacity issues, the Forum in turn enjoys increased acceptance and credibility among local actor and community partners.

The challenges moving forward

An internal survey carried out among ACT Alliance members on localisation policies and practice signalled that ACT Alliance support to local partners in accessing advocacy spaces and facilitating their autonomous advocacy actions remains uneven. In part, difficult political contexts hinder advocacy engagement by communities and local actors. Lack of resources for membership fees required for governance fora, necessary extra human resources and geographic access are also reasons our local and national members highlight as barriers to participation in those spaces.

In coming years, ACT Alliance will focus on strengthening policy and guidelines related to local leadership and equity in partnerships. With a membership comprised of largely local and national actors, we seek to increase peer-to-peer exchange and learning opportunities as well as to address fundraising challenges today facing many of those actors.

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